

allowing the state to re-enter the Union.⁷⁹ Despite the state's new status as a member of the Union, occupying federal troops remained in the state although overt military interference with government ceased. The new Republican government only lasted for two years because, while in power, it provided enough fodder for the Democratic Party's propaganda machine to ensure defeat in the next election.⁸⁰

The state's ragged economy and mutilated infrastructure, still suffering from the ravages of the Civil War and federal occupation, were problems faced by the new Republican legislature and governor. As a result, the new legislature sought to repair the economy by issuing a large volume of railroad bonds, which drove the state deeper into debt instead of remedying the situation. Corruption and fraudulent activities were rampant in Raleigh, with unethical activity by numerous legislators, some of whom became rich as a result of their positions in government. Conservative Democratic newspaper editors picked up stories of fraud and bribery, calling the new government oppressive, brutal and corrupt. Primary among their targets were carpetbaggers and African Americans in the legislature.⁸¹

Another problem for the Republican administration was the Ku Klux Klan. Although first seen in the state during the 1868 election, the Klan became more organized and sought to reverse the power and influence of the Union League on African American voters. One of the state's

first manifestations of the Klan occurred in Wilmington in March 1868, when Colonel Roger Moore led Klan members on organized regular "rides" of mounted men dressed as apparitions through black sections of the city to intimidate the residents. The actions of the Klan were publicized by state Klan leader and Wilmington native William L. Saunders in his capacity as editor of the *Wilmington Journal*. Moore's ploy failed since local Wilmington blacks organized their own armed patrols to combat the intimidation, and after four nights of activity just prior to the election, Republicans carried the city.⁸² Although Klan supporters effectively silenced Wilmington's white editor and U.S. Senator Joseph Abbott in 1869, the organization never grew into a powerful force in the city because of the large, well-organized black population in Wilmington. As a result, the Klan's intimidation techniques failed to facilitate a Democratic victory there. After the election, Klan activity in the city decreased, although, a few months after the election, Governor Holden received a report that guns were being imported to North Carolina Klansmen in Wilmington, New Bern, and Charlotte. Because of a large Republican majority in Wilmington that was organized and able to resist Klan intimidation, residents experienced a political calm when others in the state were seeing violent Klan action. Both political parties were able to host public debate and organize nonviolent demonstrations.⁸³

Whereas the Klan diminished in strength in Wilmington, it grew in intensity in parts of the state with rural black populations. The continuous pressure

⁷⁹ Also important for the state to be allowed back into the Union was the implementation of several changes to the state's government by the legislature as dictated by Congress. Hamilton, *Reconstruction*, 288-292.

⁸⁰ Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*, 19-23; Powell, *NC Through Four Centuries*, 396-397; Hamilton, *Reconstruction*, 292, 412-416.

⁸¹ Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*, 19-23; Powell, *NC Through Four Centuries*, 395-396; Hamilton, *Reconstruction*, 287.

⁸² Evans, *Ballots and Fence Rails*, 98-102; Trelease, *White Terror*, 70.

⁸³ Hamilton, *Reconstruction*, 396, 465; Trelease, *White Terror*, 114; Evans, *Ballots and Fence Rails*, 255.